United Nations ST/AI/2018/5

Secretariat

8 February 2018

Administrative instruction

Listing and recognition of academic degrees

The Under-Secretary-General for Management, pursuant to section 4.2 of Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2009/4, and for the purpose of setting out the Organization's policy concerning how academic qualifications are recognized by the Organization and should be listed by staff members in their applications and official records, hereby promulgates the following:

Section 1
Scope

The present instruction applies to all United Nations staff members who list academic qualifications, especially post-secondary qualifications such as a first-level university degree (i.e. bachelor's degree or equivalent) or an advanced degree (i.e. master's degree, doctoral degree or equivalent) (collectively referred to as "degrees") in their job applications or official records. All staff members are instructed to confirm the applicability of the present instruction to their specific situation and to take action accordingly when required.

Section 2
Recognition of academic degrees by the Organization

2.1 The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management shall determine whether an academic qualification or its equivalent will be recognized by the Organization. Academic qualifications and equivalent degrees presented by candidates are recognized by the Organization only where the qualification is obtained from, and the equivalent confirmed by, an educational institution that is recognized, accredited or otherwise sanctioned by competent national authorities of the country in which the institution is based or the qualification was awarded.

2.2 A "recognized degree" is a degree that was accredited, at the time of its issuance, by the competent authority in the country in which the issuing institution is based.

2.3 The Organization will not recognize a degree that has been awarded by a programme requiring minimal or no coursework or awarded on the basis of the payment of fees rather than in recognition of genuine coursework.

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Section 3
Listing of degrees in job applications and official records

3.1 Staff members shall not list or otherwise rely upon the following degrees in a job application or official record:

(a) A degree that is not recognized pursuant to section 2.2 above, except where the staff member has requested a review of the degree pursuant to sections 4.3 and 4.4 below and clearly indicates that the review is pending;

(b) Incomplete degrees,[1] unless clearly marked as such;

(c) A degree that was not awarded; or

(d) A degree within the meaning of section 2.3.

3.2 To confirm whether an institution or a degree is accredited, staff members may refer to the World Higher Education Database compiled by the International Association of Universities ("IAU list").[2] Since the list reflects institution and degree accreditation at the time of publication, a degree and/or institution may not be listed in the most recent publication of the IAU list. In this case, staff members may also refer to prior publications of the IAU list.

3.3 Listing a degree as defined in section 3.1 (a) to (d) or misrepresentation of receipt of a degree may result in administrative and/or disciplinary measures, including dismissal, pursuant to staff rule 10.1.

Section 4
Obligation to confirm that degrees are recognized and requests for review

4.1 Staff members have the obligation to ensure that degrees listed in their job application or referred to in their official record are recognized degrees in accordance with section 2.2 and that the listing of each degree is in compliance with section 3.1.

4.2 Staff members serving on the date of issuance of the present administrative instruction who are unsure as to whether their degree meets the requirements of a recognized degree shall, as soon as possible and no later than six months from the date of issuance of the present instruction, contact the institution that issued their degree or the accreditation authority in the country in which the institution is based, in order to request confirmation that the degree was accredited at the time of its issuance. Before receiving confirmation of the accreditation of the degree, staff members may list the degree but should indicate that the review of the confirmation of the accreditation is pending. Staff members may not submit degrees as defined in section 2.3 for confirmation or accreditation. If they do so and it is later determined that the degrees fall under the definition of section 2.3, staff members will not be covered by the provisions of section 6.4 and will be subject to administrative and/or disciplinary measures.

4.3 If no reply is received from the institution or accreditation authority within three months of the date of enquiry, such staff members shall contact their Executive Office or local human resources office and request official review to have the accreditation of the degree confirmed by the Office of Human Resources Management.

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[1] An incomplete degree is a degree for which the staff member has done partial coursework or coursework is ongoing, or for which coursework has been satisfactorily completed but the award of the degree is pending.

[2] A recent version of the IAU list may be searched on the online Inspira platform through the "Main menu" feature, under "Self-service", "Recruiting", "Academic degrees database".

4.4 Such request for review must include the reasons why the degree should be recognized by the accreditation authority, and its equivalent, as well as a copy of the degree and the official transcript; documentation of the attempt(s) to contact the institution or the accreditation authority; and any other relevant documentation that may facilitate the review. Staff members may be required to provide the documentation in one of the six official languages of the United Nations.

4.5 The Executive Office or local human resources office will contact the relevant accreditation authority and submit the response to the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management for determination whether the degree is a recognized degree. While the review is pending, the staff member may continue to list the degree(s) in job applications but should indicate that the review of confirmation of the accreditation is pending. This caveat can be removed only when the review by the Executive Office or local human resources office and the Office of Human Resources Management has been completed.

Section 5
Interim provisions for staff with pending accreditation review

Staff members serving on the date of issuance of the present administrative instruction who inform the Executive Office or local human resources office in writing in accordance with section 4.3 above and list their degree as pending accreditation review may:

(a) Remain in their current position and at their current level; and

(b) Apply and be considered and selected for other positions at their current level or at a higher level.

Section 6
Outcome of the review

6.1 Upon completion of the review specified in section 4.5, staff members will be notified in writing of the outcome of the review. The notification will be included in their official status file.

6.2 If the degree is recognized, staff members may list their degree and its equivalent as indicated in the notification and are no longer required to include the caveat that it is pending review.

6.3 If the degree is not recognized following the review specified in section 4.5, the staff member must remove the degree from the official record and may not list the degree in job applications. Failure to comply with this instruction may result in administrative and/or disciplinary measures, including dismissal, pursuant to staff rule 10.1.

6.4 As a one-time amnesty for staff members who have requested a review in accordance with sections 4.4 and 4.5, if the degree is not recognized and the staff member has no other recognized degree required to meet the minimum academic qualifications for the encumbered position, the staff member may remain in that current position and level. The Office of Human Resources Management will also consider the staff member as having the minimum academic qualification to apply and be considered and selected for other positions at that current level if the staff member satisfies all other minimum requirements. However, the staff member shall not be eligible to apply for job openings at a higher level until the staff member meets the minimum required academic qualifications with a recognized degree.

6.5 For all staff members, listing a degree that is not recognized may result in administrative and/or disciplinary measures, including dismissal, pursuant to staff

rule 10.1. However, a degree that is not recognized may be listed in specific circumstances when the Office of Human Resources Management has considered that the staff member possesses the minimum academic qualification as set out in section 6.4.

Section 7
Final provisions

The present administrative instruction enters into force on the date of its issuance.

(*Signed*) Jan **Beagle**
Under-Secretary-General for Management